



YEMEN COUNTRY PROFILE

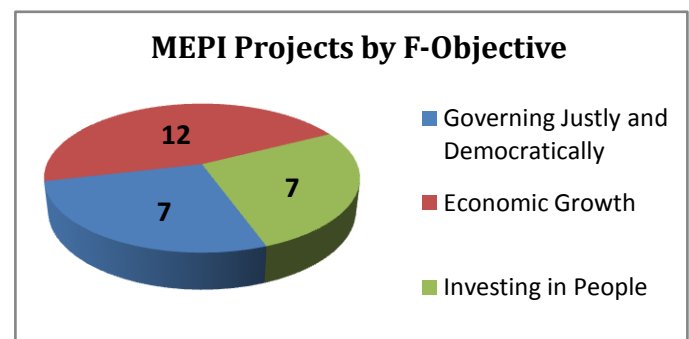
MEPI in Yemen: Developing Civil Society

With more than 7,000 registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but little to no indigenous funding for its nascent civil society, Yemen has benefitted greatly from MEPI programming. MEPI's work in Yemen focuses on supporting the elements of society that are essential to an inclusive democratic process: a responsible, independent media; full electoral participation by women; responsible and representative political parties; effective and robust non-governmental organizations; and responsive education and private sectors. Another emphasis of MEPI's work is deepening and strengthening the public sector and its ability to provide transparent oversight, while also increasing the interaction between politicians and civil society. Lastly, in order to instill civic values in youth, MEPI works closely with Yemeni students, parents, and teachers.

MEPI's Yemen Portfolio

There are currently 26 active MEPI projects in Yemen: 19 multi-country projects including Yemen; and 7 Yemen-specific projects.

The pie chart shows which U.S. Foreign Assistance objectives are addressed by MEPI programming in Yemen.



MEPI's Partnerships in Yemen

The success of the **MEPI Local Grants program**, or grants administered directly out of U.S. Embassies in the region by U.S. diplomats, in Yemen is particularly notable given the larger context. As the least developed country in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemeni civil society organizations (CSOs) and the Yemenis that run them are in need of funding. In the first six months of 2009 alone, the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a received over sixty applications for MEPI funding, a high number in Yemen's restrictive environment. In addition, MEPI local grants function as a rapid reaction force for change. For example, when the State Department expressed an interest in finding and funding an NGO to work on the issue of early childhood marriage in September 2009, the MEPI Committee at the Embassy in Sana'a was able to identify an appropriate organization and solicit a grant application within a few weeks.



The Local Grants program has made a particular impact in supporting emerging CSOs in Yemen. Hafez Al-Bukari, President of the **Yemen Polling Center**, said that MEPI was the first donor organization to support his Center and that MEPI grants were intrinsic to its ability to build the organization to international standards. Dr. Arwa Yahya Al-Deram, Executive Director of **SOUL**, a CSO that focuses on the health, education, and social development of women and children, credits MEPI in both the establishment and development of SOUL. MEPI also brings existing CSOs into contact

with each other, often making the initial connections between major players in civil society in terms of operation. In the words of Ezzadin Al-Ashbahi, General Director of the **Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC)**, "the best thing that MEPI did was create coalitions of CSOs both within Yemen and throughout the region."

Updated 02-25-10

The **National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Expanding Support for Political Reform** project increases the capacity of CSOs to inform and influence debate on key social and political issues and provides technical support to the Yemeni parliament. Using MEPI funds, NDI has helped organizations establish themselves as sustainable, engaged advocates for Yemeni citizens and local governance. In 2009, NDI contributed to the organizational development of eleven associations through workshop sessions and consultative assistance on internal communication, financial management, team building, and resource development.

Through the **MENA Media** project, the **International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)** worked with local NGO **Yemeni Parliamentarians against Corruption (YemenPAC)** on a draft Access to Information Law. The completed committee report on the draft law was sent to the full Parliament and the legislation is now on the agenda awaiting final approval. IREX has also worked with the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in reforming the current Press and Publications Law.



Establishing Student Councils, implemented by the **Academy for Educational Development (AED)**, has exposed over 20,000 students from more than 100 high schools in the Governorates of Sana'a, Mareb, Shabwah and Amran to the democratic principles of participation and respect for diversity and differing viewpoints. The project's goal is to promote youth leadership and community participation in schools, while exposing students to the fundamentals of democracy through classroom elections. One student council repaired a nearby road for the school's community, and another council succeeded in having sanitation facilities built for

its school. Boys and girls are now becoming leaders and working with school administrators and Parent councils to improve their communities. The first Student Councils conference in Yemen took place in January 2010, bringing together students with Governorate Officials to discuss changes made in their schools and communities as well as issues the councils would like to address in the upcoming year. A manual for building successful student councils was released prior to the conference and is available for students in Arabic and English. The project's success led the Yemeni Minister of Education to require that all of the country's more than 14,000 schools form student councils.



Supporting Civic Responsibility and Private Sector Job Creation, implemented by the **Education for Employment Foundation (EFE)**, is a highly scalable and replicable model for employer-driven education and training linked to jobs. The program creates partnership foundations led by education, business, and civil society leaders that are dedicated to youth education and employment in the Middle East. In Yemen, the WorkPlace Success training and program create skilled and confident leaders capable of effectively participating in their communities and ultimately playing a role

in strengthening Yemen's economic infrastructure. After graduating from the WorkPlace Success training program, trainees have been hired by premium employers in the local community.